

## **KANEGASAKI SISTER CITY COMMITTEE**

Fiscal Year 2005

Members: Byron Koh, Nancy Bess, Denise Boyd, Florence Boynton, Alex Kent, Carolyn Platt, Nancy Pagano

Select Board Liaison: Carl Seppala (until 3/05) Anne Awad (3/05 on) Staff Liaison: Barry DelCastilho

Resignation/Term Ended: Joan Snowdon, Carl Seppala (SB Liaison), Yuko Takahashi

### **Visiting Dignitaries**

Summer is typically an uneventful time for the Kanegasaki Sister City Committee (KSCC), but in 2004 we had two Japanese visitors. On July 16, 2004, Mayor Yoshihiro Yishida, Mayor of Yinuyama, Aichi Prefecture, came for an overnight stay. The Mayor graduated from the University of Doshisya, one of Japan's most highly regarded private universities, and he was especially interested in visiting Amherst. Members of the KSCC worked with Anne Awad and Carl Seppala to hold a warm reception in Town Hall, where various local officials hosted a most pleasant and informative presentation about our town Meeting form of government, which the Mayor was particularly eager to learn more about.

The KSCC invited Miyuki Chida, our future liaison from the Planning and Promotion Division of Kanegasaki Town Hall, to visit Amherst August 14-17. She was attending summer school, studying English and Public Policy at Pace University, as part of her preparation for this new role, and the timing was perfect for her to spend the weekend to become familiar with the KSCC and Amherst. Miyuki's weekend in Amherst included dinner at Bertucci's, a tour of areas we typically show Japanese visitors (such as Historic Deerfield, the colleges, the William Smith Clark Memorial), and a dinner with KSCC members at Byron Koh's home on Lincoln Avenue. Miyuki stayed with Nancy Bess on Harkness Road. The weekend was great fun for all and our goal of forming a close working relationship with our new Kanegasaki liaison-in training was achieved.

### **Establishing Unity of Purpose and Concensus with School Department**

Beginning in August, a dialogue began between the Middle School Administration, Barry Del Castilho, and members of the KSCC, about the issues surrounding future student exchanges. The March visit of Middle School students from Kanegasaki to Amherst requires a significant commitment of time from at least one teacher, and school expense for visitors' meals in the cafeteria, transportation, and administrative support. In spite of the School Department's fiscal constraints, Principal Mary Cavalier committed to the continuation of the March visit as usual, as the experience is so enriching, rewarding, and educational for all involved. Middle School teacher Denise Boyd agreed to coordinate the 2005 student exchange program.

The April trip, when Amherst students traditionally journey to Kanegasaki, will no longer receive funding from the Freeman Foundation to offset student and chaperone expenses. (The Foundation has always been clear that their support for the last several years was finite and to be viewed as seed money.) Past teacher chaperones, parents, and KSCC members spent several hours, in several meetings, brainstorming how to rescue a version of the trip for the dozen or so Amherst young people whose lives would be forever changed by a visit to Japan. Some ideas were to scale down the trip by limiting the number of cities that would be included, increasing the number of home-stay days or using no-frills lodging, changing trip timing, or offering a version of the trip just for those who could afford it. After much debate, and with a great deal of

regret, the School Department and KSCC agreed that, until alternative funding can be found to make the trip affordable for all, no student trip to Kanegasaki would be pursued in 2005.

### **Scope of the KSCC Role In Furthering Youth Exchanges**

KSCC members feel that the leaders of the campaign to have a trip for Amherst students to Kanegasaki should be the School Department and parents of students associated with the program, both past and present. The KSCC will lend its support in whatever way possible. We are willing to help with grant-writing, community fundraising, assisting with the design of the trip itself, and communication with Kanegasaki.

There was some discussion about the KSCC role, and the anticipated Middle School response, should a group of families with the necessary funds want help in organizing a trip without school sponsorship. The KSCC see their charge as one of helping to facilitate community exchanges for people of all ages with Kanegasaki, but not to seek funding or to ask for home-stays for a trip that would be only possible for those who had the financial resources to afford it. In addition, we would make it clear to our counterparts in Kanegasaki that the youth had not been screened or handpicked to participate and that such a trip was not a school-sponsored or -endorsed event.

### **Establishment of Japanese Culture Club at Middle School, Spring 2005**

KSCC member Alex Kent suggested promoting interest in Japan by developing a Japanese Language and Culture Club called Sabuta (meaning “something good”) for seventh graders, as part of the Middle School after-school offerings. His thoughts were that the club could involve anime (movies/animation), manga (comics), and computer games to introduce kids to the culture. Principal Mary Cavalier was very enthusiastic about this idea and Wendy Kohler, Executive Director of Secondary Curriculum, agreed to help. Alex feels that if such a program includes a comprehensive language component, it might result in grant funding from a U.S.-Japanese Foundation. Alex visited with representatives of the UMass Asian Language and Culture Program to see if their students could participate as a practicum. Two UMass graduates volunteered to lead the Club, which started in the spring. We are hopeful that the number will increase, starting at the beginning of the semester this fall.

### **March Kanegasaki Exchange**

Twenty-three Kanegasaki seventh graders and four chaperones visited Amherst March 23-27<sup>th</sup>. Students attended two classes at the Middle School, were taken on a walking tour of Amherst, visited Yankee Candle, toured UMass, ate on campus at the Worcester Dining Commons (thanks to arrangements made by Alex Kent), went to a maple sugar house and to a bowling party. While on the UMass campus, students also had a chance to visit the Japanese language students there – this experience was particularly memorable for all the students and will be included in future years.

KSCC members helped entertain chaperones with a potluck dinner at Byron Koh’s home, dinner at Bertucci’s another night, and tours of the Emily Dickinson House, the Jones Library, the UMass Durfee Conservatory, the Clark Memorial and the Dubois Library. Everyone enjoyed a lovely potluck dinner the last night at the Middle School, where Kanegasaki students entertained with ritual dances in traditional costume complete with masks. This exchange was a huge success, thanks in particular to the great organizing talents of Denise Boyd, Teresa Beaudry, and the cooperative efforts of the KSCC and all the host families.

### **Membership Notes**

Three wonderful long-time KSCC members ended their terms or moved on this year. **Joan Snowdon** served six years devotedly as a terrific connection to the School Department. She was very actively involved with student exchanges and brought the wisdom that comes with escorting student groups to Japan to all KSCC meetings. Joan often served as an important link to the school administration. **Yuko Takahashi**, a UMass graduate student from Japan, worked closely with Committee members in her three years in Amherst. She helped us better understand the culture, interpreted when delegations visited, and helped as a go-between in communication over the internet and during exchanges with Japanese officials. Her special sweetness and friendship will certainly be missed. **Carl Seppala**, our Select Board liaison since 2000, worked with the KSCC devotedly until his resignation from the Board this March. Carl loved his visits to Kanegasaki and did all he could to enrich the experience of officials who visited Amherst. He brought humor and charm to occasions with Kanegasaki dignitaries, whether the occasion was an informal beer or serving as master of ceremonies at formal ceremonies. His generosity of time and money to the sister city relationship was exemplary.

### **Our Sister Library in 2005 (Contributed by Carolyn Platt, Jones Library Head of Technical Services)**

The Sister Library relationship remains strong. The Kanegasaki Public Library sent the Jones Library a large box of children's books last winter. The Jones shipped a (smaller) box of children's books last spring, thanks to funds from the KSCC, the Jones Library, and a small donation from the Eric Carle Museum. Additionally, the Jones sent along a few more books in the suitcase of Florence Boynton, who visited Kanegasaki with her daughter, Anne Awad, last May. The books that the Jones has sent are mainly by local authors and artists, or they have some kind of New England connection. As a result, books have been sent about Emily Dickinson, small town New England, farming, and several picture books by Eric Carle, etc. Interestingly, the gifts that Kanegasaki has seemed to like the most are brochures and pictures of the Town of Amherst. The Japanese really want to know us. We look forward to watching our friendship grow through future exchanges between our two libraries. It's a wonderful program.

### **Looking Ahead**

In FY 06, the KSCC will focus on assisting school and parental groups with fundraising activities so student exchanges with Kanegasaki can continue in spite of fiscal constraints. We will also aid Town officials as needed in the hosting of any Japanese delegations and actively seek new KSCC members. We remain committed to supporting the important work of promoting peace and understanding between different cultures.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
**Nancy Hirsh Pagano, Secretary**